

Remarks

Favorable reconsideration of this application, in view of the following remarks and discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-26 are currently pending in the application.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-21, 25, and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,160,780 to Furukawa et al. (Furukawa) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,831,476 to Branc et al. (Branc), U.S. Patent No. 6,275,459 to Obata et al. (Obata), and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,272,093 to Kurozuka et al. (Kurozuka). Claims 22-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Furukawa in view of Obata, Kurozuka, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,657,172 to Shibata et al. (Shibata). Applicants respectfully assert that the rejections of the claims have been overcome for the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully assert that Obata qualifies as prior art only under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e), because although Obata has an U.S. filing date that is before the U.S. filing date of the present application, Obata does not qualify as prior art under 35 U.S.C. §§ 102(a)-(d), (f), or (g). Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 103(c) and in accordance with MPEP § 706.02(l)(1), because the application and Obata were, at the time the invention of the application was made, jointly owned by Sony Corporation, the patentability of Claims 1-26 shall not be precluded. Thus, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections of Claims 1-26 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) be withdrawn and the claims allowed.

Consequently, in view of the present response, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to

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be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-26 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.



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Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Ward".

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